In cases where the admixture is more than 10%, the category is downgraded to the next lower category. There was pressure in some places that procuring agencies buy paddy even, with higher admixture of fine variety of paddy in superfine at the rate of Rs. 380 per quintal (MSP fixed for superfine). The procurement operation is conducted as per the norms/ specifications of the grains offered. There are no reports of *PR-106* variety of paddy conforming to the uniform specifications being purchased as fine.

Patent for Genetically Engineered Cotton

2732. SHRI SOM PAL : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a patent for genetically engineered cotton has been granted to a US multinational Agracetus giving a complete monopoly over all forms of genetically engineered cotton in violation of the Indian Patent Act;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what is its likely effect on the research for improvement of cotton varieties being carried out in the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM) : (a) M/s. Agracetus Inc. of USA was granted a Patent No. 168950 for a "method of producing transformed cotton cells by tissue culture", under the Patents Act, 1970 which was later revoked by Government under Section 66 of the Patents Act, 1970.

(b) and (c) Question does not arise.

Recommendations of Johal Committee

2733. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) what are the recommendations of the Johal Committee which was set up to give its report on diversification of agricultural produce from wheat/paddy rotation to some other crops in Punjab ;

(b) whether diversification to sugarcane production was recommended by the Committee;

(c) if so, how many sugar mills, according to it, are required in addition to the existing sugar mills in Punab; and

(d) the steps being taken to promote diversification from traditional crops in Punjab ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM) : (a) Major recommendation of Johal Committee Report submitted in May, 1986 inter alia includes that oilseed crops, pulses and sugarcane are the crops for diversification in lieu of wheat/paddy rotation in Punjab.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Committee recommended 50 more sugar mills in the State.

(d) State Government has taken steps to promote diversification, which bring about significant increase in area coverage under sugarcane, number of sugar mills and their crushing capacity since 1985-86. Some important steps of State Government are as follows :

(i) Most promising crop sequences like Rice-gobhi, sarson-mung bean ; Rice-potato-groundnut, etc. are being popularised.

(ii) Programmes for distribution of disease free seed varieties and other incentives have been initiated to increase the acreage under sugarcane.

(iii) An exercise is underway to determine a limited number of locations where additional area can be brought under sugarcane without compromising the reserve area of existing mills.

Protection of the Interests of Cotton Growers

2734. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) the steps taken by Government to protect the interests of the cotton growers to provide due prices of their produce which is denied to them in the absence of a free-market and they are exposed to the greed of textile industry by putting ban on exports of raw-cotton;

(b) what were the prices of cotton in the world market when their export was banned and to what extent the prices were pushed down; and

(c) the steps to safeguard the interests of cotton-growers ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM) : (a) and (c) The announcement of Minimum Support Price (MSP) and release of automatic quota of 5 lakh bales of cotton are made annually.

(b) The varieties of cotton produced in other countires are not strictly comparable to those produced in India. However the prices of some of the foreign varieties were ruling higher than the Indian varieties of cotton when their export was temporarily suspended during 1993-94. Even after the suspension of exports, prices generally maintained an upward trend.